

SAN DIEGO COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
KEARNY MESA JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY
INSPECTION REPORT
2007

Facility Name: KEARNY MESA JUVENILE
DETENTION FACILITY (KMJDF)

Inspection Date: 12/13/07
Last Inspection Date: 10/25/2006

Superintendent: Yvette Klepin, Probation Director

Address: 2801 Meadow Lark Drive
San Diego, CA 92123

Telephone Number: (858) 694-4500
Fax: (858) 694-4333

Type of Facility: Juvenile Hall

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge:
Honorable Susan Huguenor

Staff Interviewed: Yvette Klepin

Total Bed Capacity: 359

Juvenile Justice Commission Chair: Steve Wiley

Commission Inspection Team:
William Apan
Debbie Niemi-Escalera

Recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase Health & Human Services Agency's services, as HHSA has recently had a decrease in hours available to the youth due to recent budget cuts. At this time, they are only able to provide preventative care services to a select amount of youth and one-half hour per day for the kids that are unfamiliar with the system. All other kids lack in HHSA services.
2. Remove and replace all porcelain toilets with stainless steel toilets in units 200, 400 and 500 as part of the overall upgrade to the facility when funding is available.

2006 RECOMMENDATION:

Probation continues to improve the overall technology in the facility, replacing the current log system and transitioning to paperless probation.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Has the facility exceeded capacity since the last inspection?

Yes. As of today, there are 287 detainees. In the past year, there have been as many as 380 juveniles housed in the facility; however, the normal capacity is in the low 300's. When numbers are above board rated capacity, minors are transferred to the East Mesa facility. Superintendent Klepin has implemented a GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) system that tracks minors on home supervision which has helped to relieve overcrowding in the facility.

Does the facility house minors under Section 601 Welfare & Institutions Code?

Yes. 601s are housed separately from the 602 minors. 601s are also separated in the Intake, Booking & Release (IBR) area. This area was viewed by the Commissioners and is very separate from the remainder of the general population. Some minors are detained for violations during weekends. School, reading material, movies and other programs are in place for these minors.

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SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION INDICATE:

Number of Suicides: 0

Number of Deaths from other causes: 0

Number of Attempted Suicides: 2

Number of Escapes: 0

LOCAL INSPECTIONS

Fire Inspection: October 26, 2006 (Health & Safety Code Section 13146.1) Held every two years
Medical/Mental Health: March 7, 2007
Environmental Health: March 7, 2007
Nutritional Health: March 7, 2007 (Health & Safety Code Section 101045)

Date of Last Fire Drill: 10/17/07 Disaster Drills twice a year: 10/22/07

SLEEPING ROOMS (Cells)

Comments:

Although the actual bed capacity is 596, a Juvenile Court order has limited capacity to 557. The Board of Corrections has placed a cap at 359 beds. Occupancy was 287 on the day of the inspection. Due to budget constraints and the opening of the East Mesa facility, Kearny Mesa is limited to 10 living units as opposed to 8 units which were open last year. The increase in female wards has resulted in closing one male unit and permanently opening an additional female unit. Every cell in the facility has been recently painted. One additional male unit for the younger males was opened this year.

STAFFING

Staff to Child Ratio: Awake and Sleeping

Ratio is compliant with standards: 1:10 awake and 1:30 sleeping.

Communication in language minor can understand? Yes.

The primary language spoken by minors other than English is Spanish. Many of the correctional staff members are bilingual, English/Spanish. Additionally, the facility subscribes to Interpretalk, a telephone translation service which can provide telephone translation for a wide variety of languages within 30 minutes. Translators come to the facility if the need arises. There is also capability of obtaining American Sign Language interpreters as well.

Diversity of Staff:

Kearny Mesa's staff members represent diverse ethnicities and cultures, including Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islanders, Asian, Caucasian and African-American.

Staff/Minor Interactions:

Staff members expressed the desire to always do what is in the best interest of the child. It is apparent that there is an overall positive level of respect towards the minors. As part of TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), correctional officers are assigned small caseloads of wards and meet with them a minimum of once per week for initiating a service plan while in custody to improve in risk areas. This adds a relationship component to the discipline and day-to-day expectations. Additionally, several of the units are successfully implementing a rewards-based point system.

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Staff Interviews – Comments:

Yvette Klepin, Superintendent - During our interview, she was extremely well prepared and most accommodating. She reported that the facility had recently undergone significant improvements, including painting of all cells, new toilets (except Units 200, 400 and 500), reseeding the field in the P.E. area, as well as creating an obstacle course which is part of the Obesity project. She was happy to report that they have started installing computers for the juveniles' use that will include internet accessibility. One computer will be available in all classrooms and also the day room. This plan has been requested and approved, and is in the five-year forecast.

CONDITIONS OF GROUNDS

Lawns, playing fields, blacktop, asphalt and other:

Lawns, playing fields, blacktop and asphalt were noted to be in good condition.

EXTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

General condition, paint, roof, drains/gutters, etc.:

Exterior of the building has been well maintained. Units 200 and 400 had re-pavement of outside activity area due to gopher holes that were filled in.

INTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

Walls, paint, floors, drains, plumbing fixtures, air vents, windows, etc.:

The Kearny Mesa facility is an aging facility which accommodates a high volume of youths on a daily basis. On average, about 600 juvenile offenders are booked into KMJDF each month. That being said, the interior of the building is consistently maintained. Painting of the entire facility is almost complete. The new light yellow color is brighter and provides more natural light in the day rooms, creating a greater feeling of openness and warmth. All glass windows on the doors to all cells and sleeping rooms were replaced. New lighting fixtures and lights were added to all sleeping rooms. All toilets have been changed to stainless steel and all shower doors have been replaced in all units with the exception of units 200, 400 and 500. These areas have not been changed over as of yet due to funding issues. No occupied areas in ill repair were noted during the extensive walk through.

Are cleaning fluids and chemicals labeled and safely stored?

All cleaning fluids and chemicals were stored in locked areas and away from wards.

Weapons locker location:

No weapons are allowed in the facility. Law enforcement officers who bring wards in for booking lock their weapons in the Sally Port.

Recreation/Sports equipment:

Volleyball nets and a playing field were visible during the tour. Day rooms were large and adequate for the population.

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Are the hallways clear and doors propped open?

Hallways were clear. Doors along hallways were propped open. Doors to offices and unused rooms were kept locked.

Court Holding Area:

Wards from other facilities awaiting court hearings were provided with clean rooms, separate from the general population.

Sleeping rooms/dormitories:

Sleeping rooms are small with a bed, writing shelf, small sink and toilet. Toilets in each of the sleeping rooms have been replaced. Depending on the occupancy, efforts are made to have one ward to a sleeping room. Units 200 and 400 continue to be kept vacant. The walls of the sleeping rooms had noticeable signs of graffiti. However, the director explained that despite constant cleaning and graffiti removal, wards consistently engage in marking up the walls.

Beds:

Beds in some areas are metal platform beds with a mattress. All beds are 12" from the floor.

Art, books, personal possessions allowed in sleeping rooms?

Paperback books and a few limited personal possessions are permitted in sleeping rooms. Personal belongings are kept in plastic boxes and stored next to or under the beds.

Graffiti present?

Graffiti was not observed in any areas other than the sleeping rooms of the wards. The Director noted that at times graffiti is present. In some units, staff is placed in charge of a certain number of rooms with wards helping to keep them clean; in these areas, graffiti is less of an issue. Mural type paintings were present in some of the units which help keep graffiti deterred.

Ample blankets?

Ample blankets are available to the wards. At this time of year, the wards are provided with one blanket each. However, additional blankets are available to the wards upon request. New blankets have arrived and are available to the wards.

Study area:

Because of safety concerns, wards are not permitted to have pens outside the school room. Pencils are allowed in their rooms for individual writing; however they are confiscated if misbehavior is noted. They do not have homework. They are able to study in their rooms or in the day room.

Adequate lighting?

Adequate lighting was observed in the sleeping rooms, the day rooms, and hallways. New lighting was added to all sleeping rooms.

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Temperature:

Temperature was comfortable throughout the facility on walk-through. As mentioned by Superintendent Klepin, problems within the central air system have been resolved within the past few months, improving the effectiveness of temperature control, particularly in the very hot and very cold months.

ORIENTATION OF MINORS

Are minors oriented to rules and procedures?

Each ward receives an individual copy of the rules when they are booked into the facility. Correctional officers discuss the rules with each ward as well as explaining the cover command.

Are rules and grievance procedures posted?

Recently, a process has been implemented to number each of the grievances filed. The process has appreciably increased the reporting levels, and made it easier to address each individual grievance. Rules and grievance procedures are not posted; however, grievance procedures are well defined in the rule book and each ward is given their own copy of the rules. Wards sign the form at each step of the grievance procedure and are given a copy of the entire form when the grievance is resolved. Attempts are made to resolve each grievance at the lowest possible level. Every grievance filed is heard and resolved at some level.

Are rules and grievance procedures understood by minors?

Minors appear to understand grievance procedures. As of June 2006, grievances are numbered which has resulted in an increase of grievances filed. Every grievance filed is heard at some level.

Minors interviewed – Comments:

No minors were interviewed during this inspection.

MEALS/NUTRITION

Kitchen – Clean; are knives and chemicals locked?

The kitchen was viewed. The kitchen was very clean; knives are kept locked and are used only by kitchen staff.

Have the youths working in the kitchen been trained?

The female units 700 and 900 alternate weeks to work in the kitchen. They are oriented and trained by kitchen staff. They are also required to watch a training video. They are involved in clean-up activities rather than food preparations, as meals are prepared in a central kitchen off site.

Are meals served or cafeteria style?

Food is prepared at the Sheriff Department's central kitchen and transported to the facility. Meals are served on prepared trays. Trays are usually prepared and set on the table when the wards enter the day room for a meal. Wards usually eat in the day room on their unit. Wards may also be required to "dine-in" in their rooms if they are being isolated for discipline reasons.

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Are minors permitted to converse during meals?

Minors are permitted to converse during meals once food is served.

Is Staff present and supervising?

Staff is present and supervises all meals, including the preparation of the room and the distribution of the meals.

Is weekly menu prepared? Is it posted?

Weekly menus are prepared and posted on the refrigerators in the unit. If a ward requires a special diet secondary to a chronic disease such as diabetes, this is ordered through the medical clinic and the food is then prepared according to specifications in the kitchen.

Are servings ample, nutritious and appetizing?

The inspection occurred between mealtimes, preventing the opportunity to inspect meals. However, the posted menu indicate that servings are generous and the meals well-balanced.

Are weaker youths protected from having food taken from them?

Meals are well supervised. If bullying is noted, the involved parties are separated and the perpetrator is placed in single room status. Efforts are made to put "like kids" together. This process is designed to prevent grouping wards of significantly disparate sizes or ages together, thereby reducing bullying. There is also no voluntary "dine-in" option, to prevent roommates from bullying one another.

Length of time allowed for eating?

30 minutes.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF MINORS

Appearance?

Both male and female minors appeared well groomed. They are outfitted in plain pants and T-shirts. The color of the T-shirt has significance regarding status of the ward. For example, female wards wear maroon; high security wards wear orange and must be accompanied by Probation staff.

Showers – Frequency? Privacy maintained? Supervised by Staff? Any assault by other youth?

Wards are permitted to take showers daily. Showers are consistently supervised by staff. Some privacy is maintained with doors covering approximately shoulders to knees. Windows were recently taken out of the shower area. This intervention reduced the amount of steam in the shower room, resulting in greater visibility for officers and fewer altercations between wards.

Condition of clothing – Does clothing fit? Is it appropriate to weather?

Clothing is loose fitting and appropriate to the weather.

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PROGRAMS

Recreation – types and amount each day:

Recreation time is provided in compliance with Title 15 requirements. Programs such as Personal Responsibility, Literacy, Anger Management, Chemical Dependency, and Prenatal classes are made available to the wards in this facility. Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) programs are also in place and group speakers are currently being scheduled for upcoming program meetings, along with “Thinking for a Change” program. Wendy Wade is the new program coordinator. Recreation occurs for a minimum of three hours on weekdays, and five hours on weekends.

Exercise – Daily schedule and amount of time each day:

In accordance with Title 15 regulations, wards have one hour of physical education in the morning during their school hours and one hour in the afternoon supervised by Probation.

Access to Religious Services?

Wards that choose to participate have access to religious services. Catholic and Christian services are provided once per week at KMJDF. Additionally, the Chaplain will arrange for a visit from a minister of any denomination requested by a ward.

Medical/Mental Health services:

Medical and Mental Health services provided at KMJDF are exemplary. CFMG (California Forensic Medical Group) continues to contract with Children's Hospital for pediatric services provided to wards age 15 or less. Wards older than 15 receive medical services through Sharp Hospital. Daytime staffing includes 1 physician, 1 Physician's Assistant, 3 Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN), and 1 Registered Nurse (RN). Night staffing includes 1 RN and 2.5 LVNs. Teleconferencing allows wards at other sites to receive medical and mental health consultation from physicians and treatment professionals at KMJDF's central clinic. Mental health services on-site include psychiatrists, psychologists, Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs), and psychology interns. These professionals work in close collaboration with the medical staff in the clinic to provide medications for 10-15% of wards on psychotropic medication, as well as crisis intervention and assessment for the general population.

Volunteer Program:

Volunteers are used in a variety of programs, including Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups, and religious services. The Volunteers from Donovan State Prison are no longer able to provide presentations to the wards in an effort to motivate them to turn their lives around. This program was stopped after 19 years of service because of the adults not going through background checks and entering juvenile facilities.

Counseling and Casework:

Some of the funding to support the wards comes from Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), which requires ongoing casework. Correctional officers are assigned a small caseload and meet with their assigned wards a minimum of once per week. Wards can also request to speak with the Crisis Team, which is staffed with a psychologist, a clinical social worker and 4 interns from County Mental Health (CMH) who are closely supervised by the Mental Health team. The Director noted some wards have court orders requiring their own therapist to be placed on the visiting list, allowing them to meet with their clients during professional visiting hours. Upon release, the wards are assigned probation officers at all times and require minors to enroll in community based programs such as A. A. and Spectrum.

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Family Reunification Planning:

Since most wards at KMJDF are there waiting adjudication or transfer to another facility for programming, family reunification planning is not typically part of the services there. Parents are encouraged to visit their children during visiting hours and to stay in touch with them by phone.

Substance Abuse counseling:

Substance Abuse education and counseling is part of the program on all units. Spectrum provides drug counseling, and volunteers from NA and AA hold meetings in the units.

Victim Awareness classes:

Victim Awareness education continues to be a part of the regular programming in all units. In addition, Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) program is once per week in all units.

Gang Awareness classes:

Gang Awareness education is an integral part of the daily programming in all units.

Sexual Harassment classes:

Sexual Harassment education is presented on a daily basis. Each day, the correctional officer or detainee reads a statement defining sexual harassment and explaining what to do if a ward believes they are being sexually harassed. These allegations are taken very seriously.

Other:

The various units have implemented different types of reinforcement systems, including point systems, level systems, and reward incentives. The facility has also begun a 14-session – 16-session parenting class and implemented by the Wellness Team. This program includes education on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), parenting and variety of related topics.

DISCIPLINE OF MINORS

Frequency and type:

Consequences for misbehavior vary from counseling to short-term room confinement (2 hours) to longer time confinement (up to 5 days). Confinement excludes school and mandatory exercise periods, but limits participation in recreational activities. More frequently, minors are required to write an essay examining their behavior and identifying alternatives to negative behavior in the future. Superintendent Klepin pointed out that the Safety Room had been used four times, while the Restraint Chair was used three times in the past year. Minors are released within a 2-hour period. These restraints occur only with the director's approval.

GRIEVANCES

Number and type:

Twelve hundred (1200) grievances have been filed since June 1, 2007. Proper grievance techniques are being taught. Most grievances filed by minors are for reasons of not being treated fairly. Boxes have been added to each room and are picked up nightly. The grievance is numbered and moves through the proper channels until it is resolved.

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TELEPHONE

Access:

Wards have, at a minimum, weekly phone privileges; they are required to call collect. Some minors receive county paid phone calls based upon court order and needs of child.

CORRESPONDENCE

Is Postage Free? Is incoming and/or outgoing mail read? Is there confidential correspondence?

Yes, postage is free. Wards' incoming mail is only read if they are on mail restriction; in those cases, correctional officers follow the proper procedure. Correspondence is confidential.

VISITING

Is there adequate space, convenient times or accommodations to parent work schedule, etc. special visits? Does staff supervise visits? Is there adequate privacy?

Adequate space is available for visiting, which usually takes place in the units. Visiting hours are reasonable to accommodate parent work schedules. Professional visits are accommodated as mentioned earlier, and private space to afford confidentiality is available for this purpose. Correctional staff sits at the desk to provide supervision during visiting. Private areas are available.

Have all minors had visits?

All minors are provided the opportunity for visitation and have visits unless they have no family or the family chooses not to come. Siblings that are over 18 years old are being looked into for possible visiting as opposed to parents. Parents and family members may be turned away if they are dressed inappropriately. In those cases, they will be sent home to change clothes or given a shirt by the facility before being allowed visitation. Visitors who arrive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or are hostile to the staff, will also be turned away for that visitation time.

SCHOOL

Teachers – Number of full-time; frequency of substitutions:

The school program is year round and staffed with 20 full-time contracted teachers. There are three full time Special Education teachers and one part-time teacher. Because of the year-round schedule, substitute teachers are on site most days to cover for full-time staff vacations and sick leave. The school year is 185 days.

Number of minors in school/per classroom:

The school program is administered jointly with GRF. About 300 students (including GRF) participate in the school program. About 250 of these students are residents of KMJDF on any given day. There are 15 classrooms with a maximum of 15 students in each room. A maximum of 20 minors attend "Day rooms." All minors are required to attend school. Independent study is no longer permitted. All kids must attend school. Exceptions will be made only if necessary.

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Number of minors on independent study:

There are no students currently on independent study.

Atmosphere of classroom:

The Commissioners noted that the classrooms are well supervised with support of correctional officers readily available. The classroom had a very open feeling and was well lit. Students appeared to be engaged in the lesson during the visit. There is one teacher for every 15 students.

Adequate supplies? Books, paper, computers, etc.:

Supplies and books are very adequate. Teachers order whatever they need through the District and orders are generally filled within one to two weeks. Computers on Wheels (COWs) are used throughout the classrooms. Each classroom is in the process of having a computer put in place for the students use.

Activities and coursework:

Coursework is grade appropriate and individualized according to the needs of the students whose educational needs are individually assessed. The education program is standards based ("Power Standards") and the teachers teach to the required standards.

Are minors required to do homework?

Generally, the students' academic efforts are focused within classroom time and they are not required to do homework. Minors at Kearny Mesa are not permitted to have pens outside of the school. Most minors choose to study in the common areas.

Number of minors not attending. Reason?

All wards at KMJDF are required to have educational instruction. Wards can be suspended up to five days for such things as fighting or threatening behavior. Staff and school personnel at the facility view education as a collaborative effort, and there is little fighting in the school setting.

Relationship between the school and KMJDF staff:

Leadership is supportive of the collaborative effort between school and facility staff, and both groups have worked towards developing good communication and rapport. This relationship has progressed in a very positive manner since the new principal has been brought in.

Describe access to school, recreation, exercise and recreation for minors confined to their rooms:

Wards that are confined to their rooms are required to attend school and are allowed access to supervised exercise.

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ACCESS TO MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

There is ready access to both medical and mental health services. Newly booked wards are screened at time of intake and receive a physical within 48 hours of admission. There are boxes throughout the living areas for wards to fill out a sick leave request. These are collected by nursing staff every 4 hours and are triaged for medical staff, i.e., nurse visit, physician assistant visit, or M.D. visit. The medical team works closely with Public Health regarding public health issues such as STDs and positive PPDs (tuberculosis skin test). Wards are referred for mental health services in variety of ways, including self referrals, referrals from probation officers, correctional officers, parents, medical team, etc. The mental health team provides crisis intervention and stabilization, which may require ongoing care during time at KMJDF. The mental health team is also available during visiting hours to allow for interaction with families of the wards.

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